

media release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two Rabies-Positive Horses Confirmed in Weld County

Horse Owners Encouraged to Speak to Veterinarians & Watch for Behavioral Changes

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – Two Weld County horses have tested positive for rabies; the horses were on separate premises and their cases are unrelated. So far this year, three horses have been euthanized after showing severe clinical signs and subsequently tested positive for rabies. The first case was confirmed in Logan County in April. The Colorado Department of Agriculture is encouraging livestock and pet owners to discuss the need for rabies vaccination with their local veterinarian and to monitor their animals for behavioral changes.

“Animal owners need to primarily look for any dramatic nervous system changes such as muscle tremors, weakness, lameness, stumbling, or paralysis. Those are some of the hallmark signs that the animal may be suffering from rabies,” said State Veterinarian, Dr. Keith Roehr.

Additional examples of unusual behavior include: wild mammals that show no fear of people and pets; nocturnal animals that are active in daylight; and bats found on the ground, in swimming pools or that have been caught by a pet. Rabid carnivores, such as skunks, foxes, bobcats, coyotes, dogs and cats, may become aggressive and may attempt to bite people, pets and livestock.

Livestock and pet owners are also encouraged to discuss vaccination with their veterinarian for animals that could be exposed to wildlife that carry and could transmit the rabies virus to dogs, cats, horses, small ruminants, llamas, alpacas, and petting zoo animals.

Rabies is a viral disease infecting the brain and central nervous system. The clinical appearance of rabies typically falls into two types: “aggressive” and “dumb.” Aggressive rabies symptoms include combativeness and violent behavior and sensitivity to touch and other kinds of stimulation. There is also a “dumb” form of the disease in which the animal is lethargic, weak in one or more limbs, and unable to raise its head or make sounds because its throat and neck muscles are paralyzed.

Rabies can be passed from animals to humans. Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid animals, resulting in the spread of the disease through their infected saliva. Rabies also can be spread when saliva from an infected animal gets into open wounds, cuts or enters through membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth. No cure exists for rabies once symptoms appear although there is a vaccine to prevent the infection.

Additional Resources

Colorado Department of Agriculture

www.colorado.gov/ag/animals and click on “Livestock Health”

Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

www.colorado.gov/cdphe/rabies

US Department of Agriculture

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/

The Merck Veterinary Manual

http://www.merckmanuals.com/vet/nervous_system/rabies/overview_of_rabies.html?qt=rabies&alt=sh

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